

“This Full House:
Life Style Choice or
Compulsive Hoarding?”

Hoarding, a type of self neglect, is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day life. Severe hoarding causes safety and health hazards. An example follows:

Mrs. K is a 78 year-old widow living in a small home. While Mrs. K initially collected cookbooks and kitchen gadgets, over the years she has been loath to throw anything away including half-full food containers and unopened mail. The living space has become so limited that you must walk down narrow paths, which are flanked by ceiling high piles of newspaper and magazines. She sleeps in a chair since her bed is buried under belongings. No one visits.


Although the above situation may seem extreme, many elder abuse workers dealing with self-neglect must address the “dirty house syndrome” on a regular basis. At the 2003 Elder Abuse and Adult Protective Services Conference, four hundred and fifty professionals improved their skills in recognizing and responding to the perplexing problem of hoarding. National expert Professor Gail Steketee, Boston University School of Social Work, gave an in-depth presentation on the topics of hoarding and compulsive buying (the two issues are connected). She explained the newest research that has identified hoarding as a manifestation of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Treatment options for these behaviors include medication and cognitive and behavioral techniques.

Where to Get Help

To identify your local elder abuse agency, call either your local county/tribal aging unit or the Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources at (608) 266-2536. You may also email: StopAbuse@dhfs.state.wi.us.

State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Disability and Elder Services
Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources
P.O. Box 7851
Madison, WI 53707-7851
Phone: (608) 266-2536
Web site: dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging

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INCREASE IN ELDER ABUSE

This report documents the growing problem of elder abuse in Wisconsin. Counties report to the Department of Health and Family Services a disturbing aspect of the aging of the population - more abuse. A total of 3,853 cases of suspected abuse and neglect were reported in 2003, an increase of 3.6 percent from 2002. Tragically, 16 were fatal and 357 were considered life-threatening. Over 1 in 11 (9.3 percent) involved either a fatal or life-threatening situation. Information about the types of abuse reported, characteristics of the victims and abusers, and local responses guides the state’s efforts to prevent elder abuse and protect seniors.

DEFINING ELDER ABUSE

Four categories of elder abuse are defined in Wisconsin Statutes (Ch. 46.90). When a person age 60 or older is subjected to any of these types of abuse or neglect, it is elder abuse.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the willful infliction of physical pain, injury or unreasonable confinement. It includes, but is not limited to, beating, choking or burning, inappropriate medication or tying or locking a person up. It also includes **sexual abuse**. Sexual abuse occurs when a person has been forced, tricked, threatened or otherwise coerced into sexual contact against one’s will.

Material Abuse
(Financial Exploitation)

Material abuse is the misuse of an elder’s money or property. It includes deception, diverting income, mismanagement of funds and taking money or possessions against a person’s will.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a caregiver’s failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care results in significant danger to the physical or mental health of an older person in his/her care.

Self-Neglect

Self-neglect means a significant danger to an elder person’s physical or mental health because the elder person is unable or fails to provide him/herself with adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care.

WISCONSIN’S ELDER ABUSE LAW

Chapter 46.90 of the Wisconsin Statutes mandates each county to provide a publicized phone number to receive reports of suspected elder abuse and to designate a lead agency for investigation and reporting purposes. Most often, this is the county aging unit or department of social or human services.

Elder Abuse

2003

Lead agencies must begin investigation of physical abuse, neglect or self-neglect within 24 hours of receiving a report (excluding weekends and holidays) and within five working days of receiving a report of material abuse. Based on the results of its investigation, the lead agency may offer services to help solve the problem (subject to the limits of funding availability).

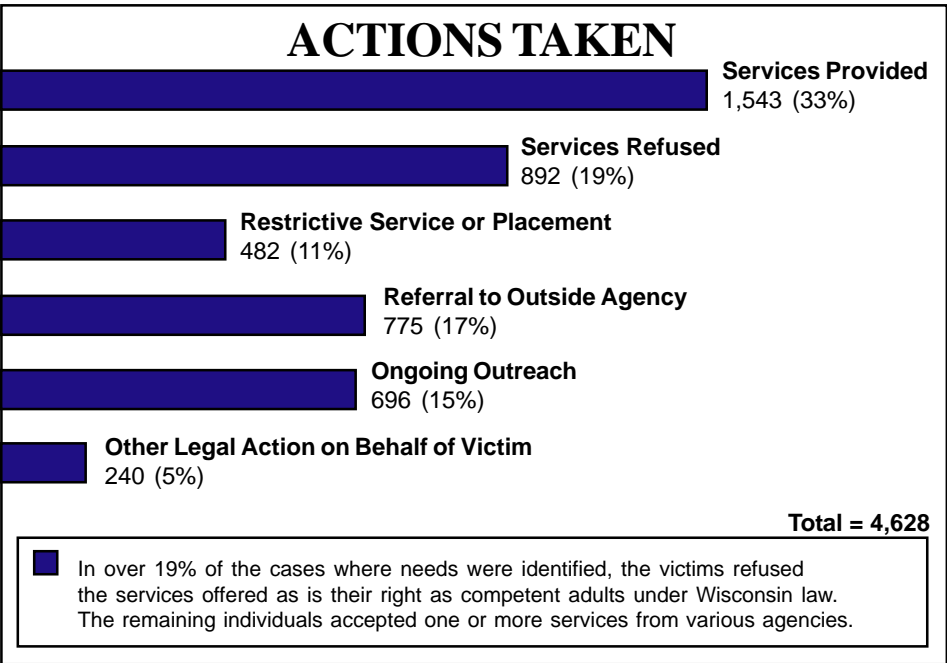
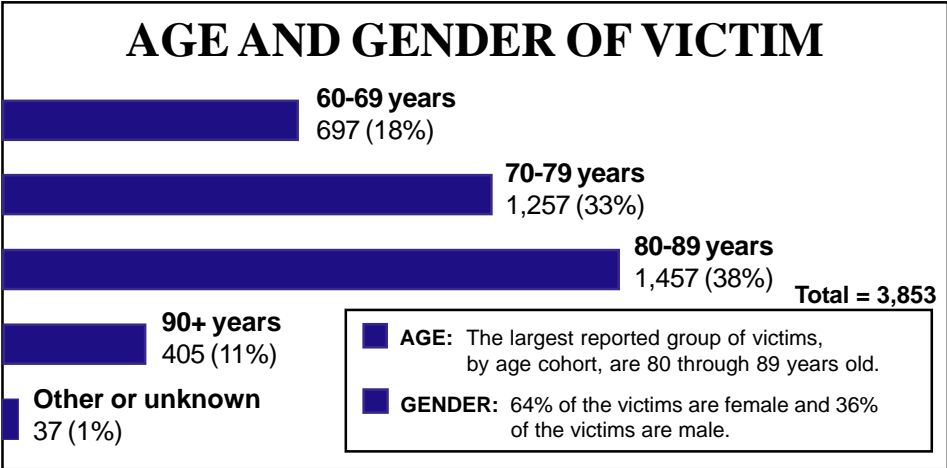
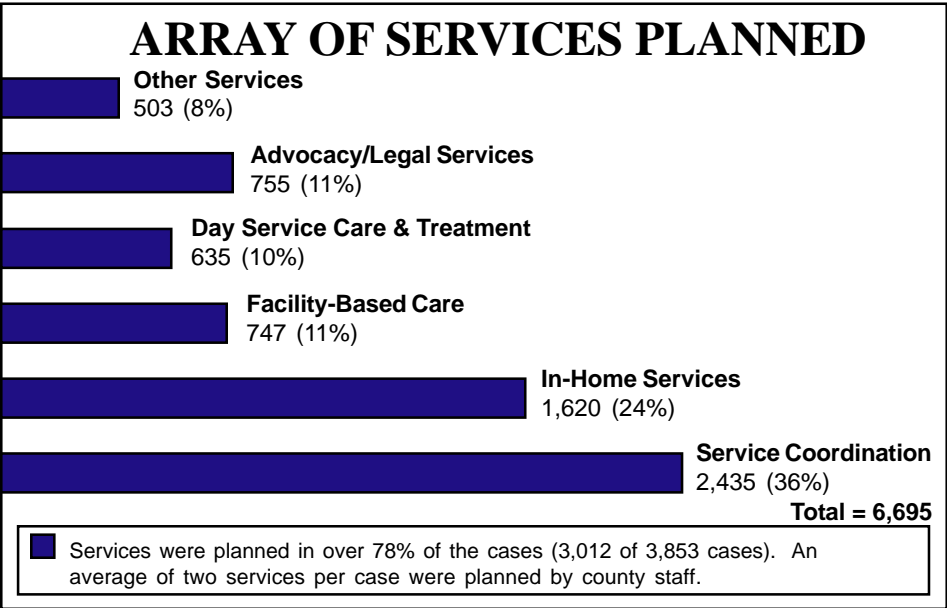
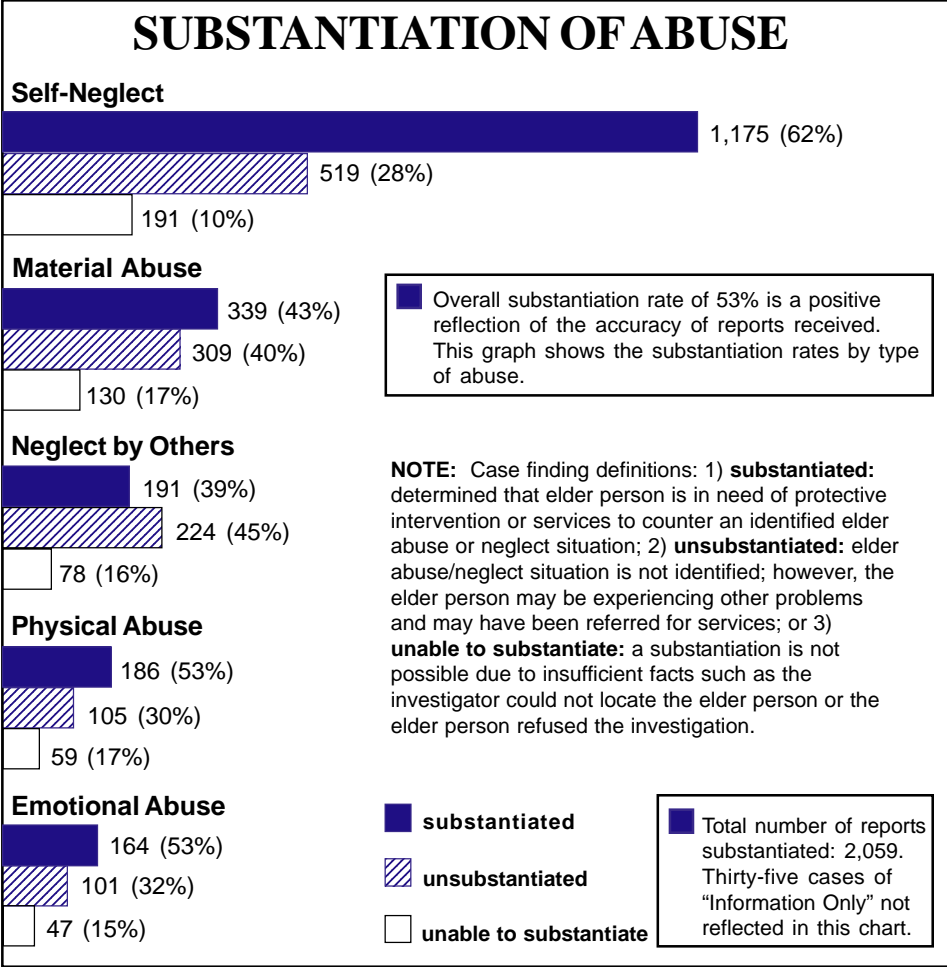
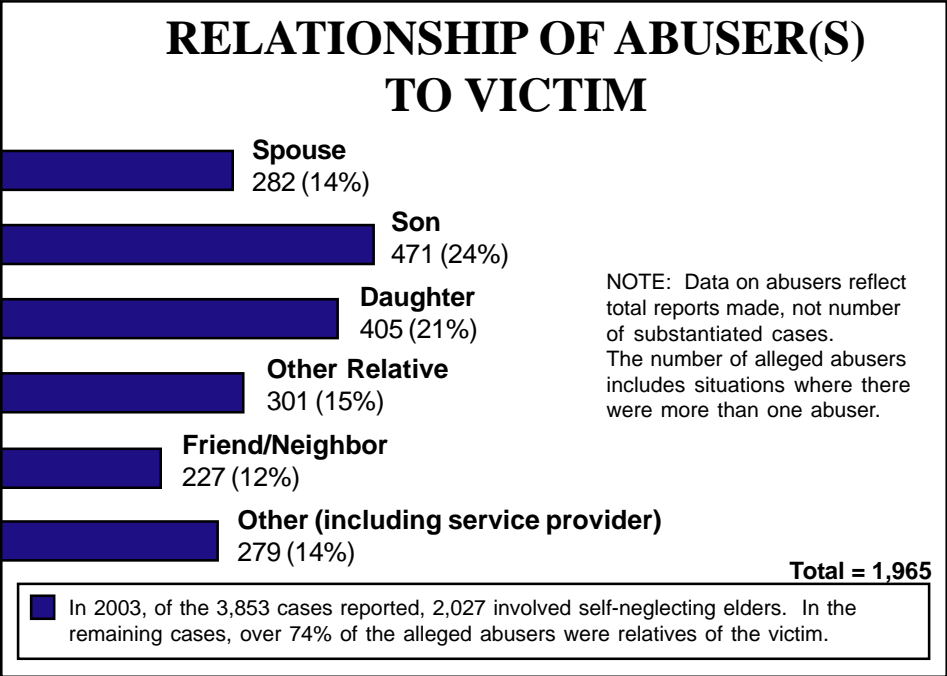
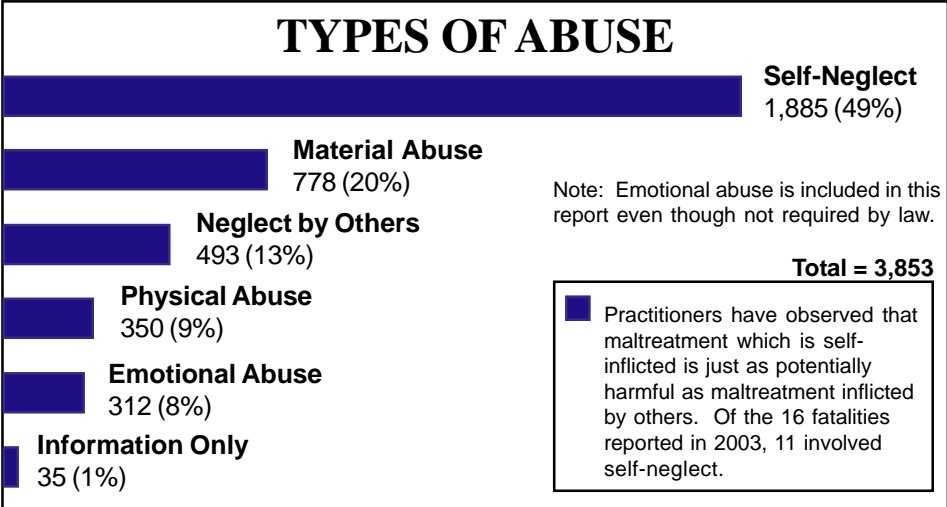
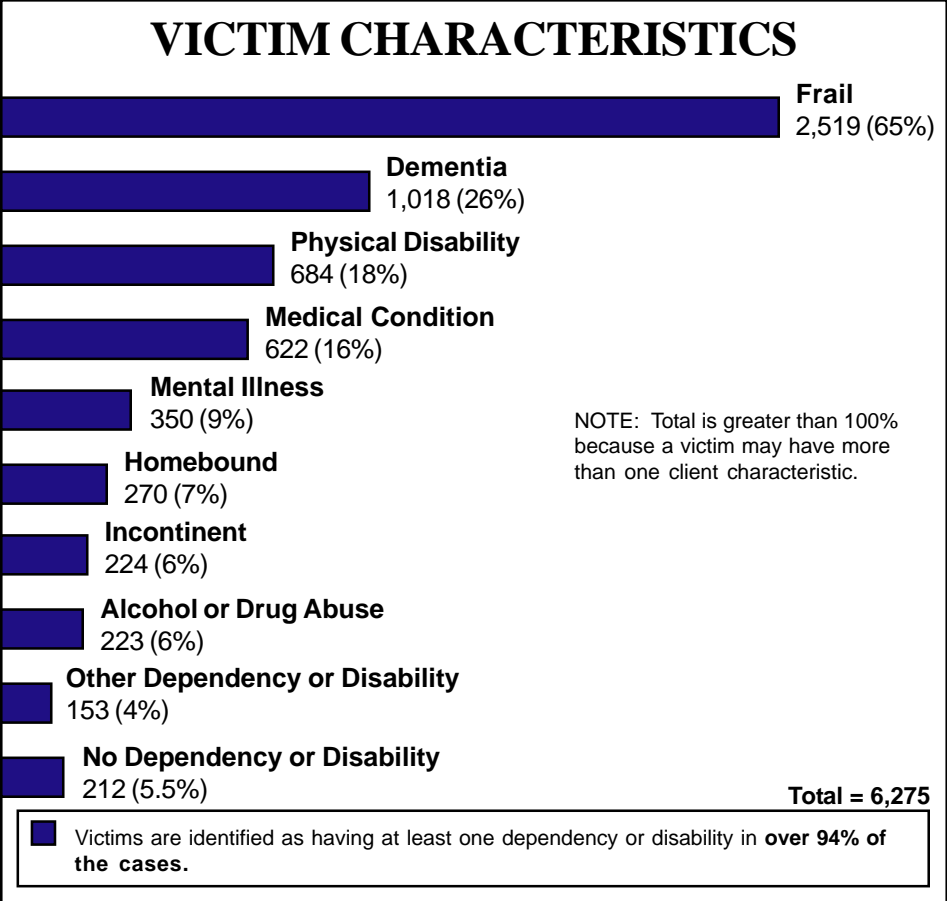
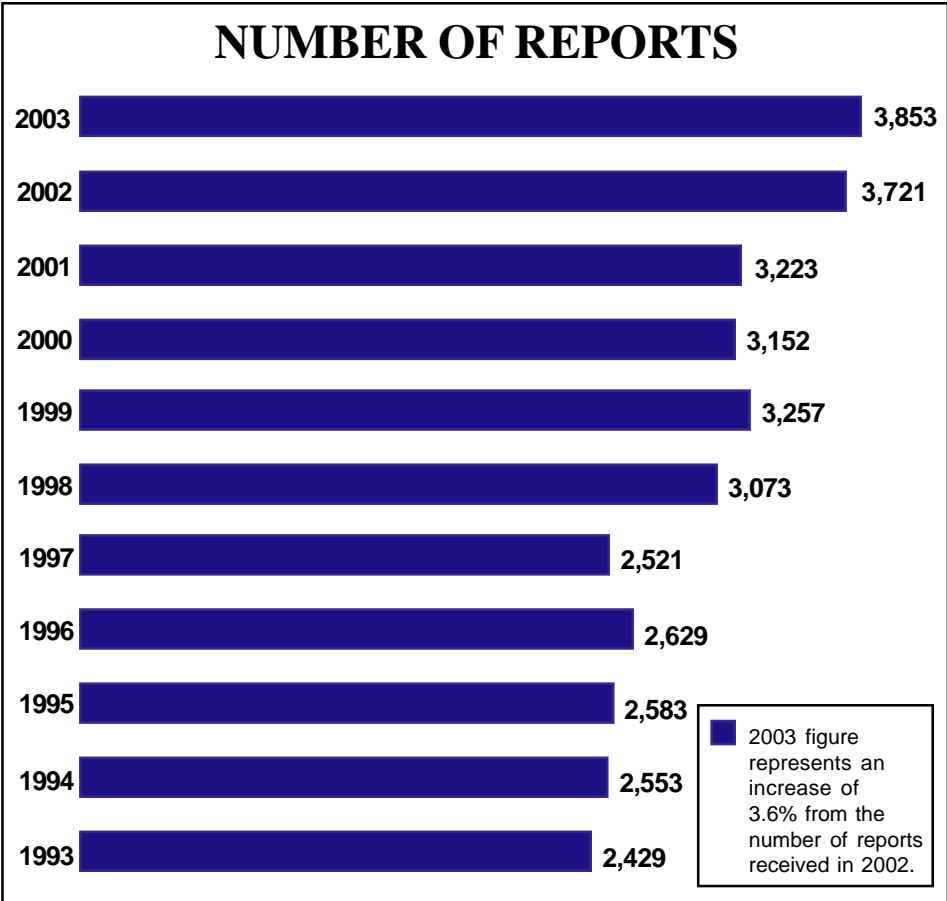
If necessary, lead agencies may notify the appropriate law enforcement agency. When abuse occurs in a nursing home, community based residential facility or by a licensed home health agency, the complaint is referred to the state Department of Health and Family Services for investigation.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The effort to stop elder abuse calls for a community-wide commitment to report and respond. Although the elder abuse law does not require reporting by attorneys or other professionals, the law does require counties to respond to voluntary reports. Competent adults have the right to decide where and how they live and whether or not they want intervention in their lives. Victims of elder abuse may refuse an investigation by an elder abuse worker. They may also refuse any help that is offered, so long as they are legally competent. In Wisconsin, help should be available if it is wanted and needed.

Wisconsin Elder Abuse

2003 DATA



ELDER ABUSE REPORTS BY COUNTY*

Total Reports for 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003

County	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Adams	14	6	10	22	18	15	28	30	37	34
Ashland	9	9	6	3	0	2	1	2	25	27
Barron	24	35	19	27	19	34	11	10	11	12
Bayfield	6	5	16	15	16	28	16	19	20	34
Brown	201	190	197	170	170	217	149	160	197	133
Buffalo	0	1	0	2	3	0	4	6	6	1
Burnett	12	3	1	7	2	3	0	1	6	5
Calumet	2	0	1	1	2	3	1	0	4	12
Chippewa	6	15	7	15	11	8	4	6	6	17
Clark	3	2	1	0	10	6	3	0	4	0
Columbia	25	51	34	44	35	27	36	53	56	47
Crawford	2	1	2	0	5	6	2	5	9	10
Dane	330	300	223	226	237	272	296	359	400	416
Dodge	10	5	5	9	14	15	15	23	15	29
Door	13	9	6	9	7	9	4	14	13	28
Douglas	5	8	14	11	13	14	18	12	16	28
Dunn	12	10	14	3	17	22	17	23	28	19
Eau Claire	30	22	25	28	25	18	24	18	21	29
Florence	0	6	4	2	1	3	1	3	7	2
Fond du Lac	70	44	66	0	88	47	48	28	66	59
Forest	0	6	10	1	2	2	6	9	2	18
Grant	19	20	26	14	28	15	28	24	30	47
Green	32	27	17	6	23	33	33	46	58	66
Green Lake	27	29	14	21	26	43	34	40	49	29
Iowa	42	26	17	22	12	12	12	5	17	26
Iron	3	1	9	0	6	0	8	2	2	7
Jackson	18	29	13	22	14	21	22	14	29	5
Jefferson	6	2	2	1	9	4	6	7	16	36
Juneau	6	5	5	4	13	6	15	12	18	18
Kenosha	171	162	172	190	180	203	240	223	218	212
Kewaunee	7	10	2	7	5	4	9	22	19	17
La Crosse	39	37	15	15	29	31	63	49	61	69
Lafayette	1	3	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	10
Langlade	26	45	54	39	48	57	49	50	80	64
Lincoln	6	5	11	17	25	17	15	11	10	15
Manitowoc	23	11	18	3	35	39	20	39	54	43
Marathon	29	39	77	79	66	57	56	53	49	71
Marinette	20	24	14	28	39	39	37	30	34	22
Marquette	3	1	2	1	1	4	2	1	6	4
Menominee	0	0	0	3	4	8	3	0	5	8

County	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Milwaukee	520	518	514	501	717	780	701	710	762	765
Monroe	2	0	5	2	4	7	10	8	14	18
Oconto	0	0	7	18	21	22	13	12	41	13
Oneida	40	44	36	35	46	57	68	66	36	61
Oneida Tribe	10	0	0	3	15	23	0	1	4	0
Outagamie	24	61	118	57	108	109	98	107	83	87
Ozaukee	33	73	64	75	46	25	48	78	96	95
Pepin	0	4	1	1	2	0	0	4	7	6
Pierce	1	1	0	2	6	7	7	10	16	22
Polk	8	9	17	16	33	19	19	11	13	15
Portage	17	9	9	12	19	12	17	19	29	33
Price	11	13	12	20	20	32	17	15	16	17
Racine	37	34	17	44	89	84	89	77	155	140
Richland	5	7	9	9	13	15	10	5	3	22
Rock	59	43	25	37	48	52	45	42	49	76
Rusk	5	14	20	6	14	4	22	25	33	38
St. Croix	26	43	45	41	36	46	41	28	25	31
Sauk	43	29	49	44	32	48	55	31	40	39
Sawyer	33	4	9	7	8	0	7	19	10	16
Shawano	10	14	26	26	36	22	53	48	30	54
Sheboygan	2	3	7	14	11	24	26	26	56	65
Taylor	10	14	25	12	10	12	8	4	11	12
Trempealeau	1	3	6	6	21	9	22	12	26	36
Vernon	0	61	49	53	57	44	42	44	39	39
Vilas	89	80	86	110	85	104	75	119	97	90
Walworth	71	48	53	48	65	88	58	66	42	21
Washburn	28	32	42	28	26	30	29	10	24	35
Washington	32	24	30	47	23	37	24	40	34	34
Waukesha	80	96	103	66	88	79	59	43	41	43
Waupaca	11	16	27	29	24	20	18	30	57	67
Waushara	18	43	35	25	26	28	43	49	23	32
Winnebago	70	56	51	59	64	80	84	64	82	82
Wood	1	3	3	0	0	2	9	17	23	33
Stockbridge Munsee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTALS*	2,549	2,603	2,629	2,521	3,073	3,266	3,153	3,251	3,721	3,866

Complied by the Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources

1 West Wilson Street, Room 450

P.O. Box 7851

Madison, WI 53707-7851

Phone: (608) 266-2536

Website: dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aging

E-mail: StopAbuse@dhfs.state.wi.us

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*Gross total prior to editing